

The Builder.

No. CXI.

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 1845.



E have received from several quarters an inquiry to the following effect:—"I am about to fix the shop-fronts to some houses commenced before the 1st of January last, and admitted up to this time not to be within the control of the new Act. Due notice was given to the district-surveyor under the old Act, and I intend to carry out the plan and deviation to which he then assented. Is it necessary I should now give him notice under the new Act, and make my shop-fronts in accordance with its provisions?"

On inquiry we are told, that the district-surveyors have obtained information that this course is to be insisted on. They are advised, we learn, that the provisions in schedule E, entitled "Wooden shop-fronts and shutters," apply generally to all buildings, whether already built or not; and in regard to already-built houses, that all projections specified in the same schedule, as not forming part of the external wall, if not completed before the 1st of January, must be conformable to the Metropolitan Buildings Act.

Having great confidence in the opinion of the referees and registrar, we are disposed to think our information must be incorrect, or that the district-surveyors misunderstand their instructions. Whether so or not, however, we cannot avoid saying, called on as we are to express an opinion upon the question, that we do not coincide with this reading of the Act. If it were asked us, Is it better that all shop-fronts now to be put up should be in accordance with the provisions of the new Act than as heretofore permitted? we should say certainly yes; inasmuch as those provisions are for the public safety. Party-walls are insufficient to prevent the spread of fire if there be a continuous wooden entablature to carry it from house to house; and the clause in the new Act which provides that this communication shall be cut off by the interposition of some incombustible material or otherwise, has been long called for.

But this is not the question now raised. The question simply is, whether or not the provisions of the Act which relate to shop-fronts extend to houses built before the 1st of January, when the shop-front was not put up before that date? and with the greatest deference to authorities, and a proper consciousness of the possibility of overlooking the force of portions of a document so voluminous and so recent as the Buildings Act, we venture to express our belief that they do not, provided the house be made fit for use before the 1st of January, 1846. We will tell our readers why.

The fifth section of the Act (which makes the schedule referred to operative), "for the purpose of regulating the building and the rebuilding upon sites of former buildings, and the enlarging and altering of all buildings of what nature soever," enacts, "with regard to every such building hereafter to be built" (with certain exceptions named) "so far as relates to building the same, and with regard to every such building either already or hereafter built" (with aforesaid exceptions) "so far as relates to the rebuilding and the enlarging or altering the same," that every such building shall be

built, rebuilt, enlarged, or altered, in conformity with the rules and directions set forth in certain schedules, one of which is the schedule (E) in question.

From this it is perfectly clear, that if we build a new house or rebuild an old one, or if we enlarge or alter either an old or a new house, this must be done in accordance with the Buildings Act. But surely nothing here calls upon us, when we have no desire to alter, to pull down any part of an old or new structure, not in accordance with the Act, and forthwith to make it so? The provisions of the Act do not come into operation until we of ourselves begin to alter the building.

Now, the house duly commenced before the 1st of last January is, in the eyes of the law, already built; the shop-front, if shop-front were intended, and be necessary to make the house complete, is, in the eyes of the law, already up; and we find nothing in the Act to force us to take it down. If one shop-front has been put up, and we remove it, the case is changed, and the new front must be in accordance with the directions given in the schedule, because the Act provides that no building already built shall be enlarged or altered but in accordance with those directions.

The clause in schedule E, relating to "Wooden shop-fronts and shutters," says no more than the clause in schedule D relating to "breastsummers;" yet it is not asserted that an intended breastsummer of a house duly commenced before January 1st must be put in in accordance with the directions contained in that schedule.

It is true, that in schedule E, the fourth paragraph says, "with regard to buildings already built or hereafter to be rebuilt, as to bow-windows, or other projections of any kind, such projections must neither be built with nor added to any building on any face of an external wall thereof, so as to extend beyond the general line of the fronts of the houses, except so far as is hereinbefore provided with regard to porticoes projected over public ways, and with regard to projections from face-walls and shop-fronts," &c.

This refers to "projected buildings beyond the general line of buildings, and from other external walls;" it is so headed, indeed, and would seem to have nothing to do with wooden shop-fronts. But even this contemplates an alteration or addition; it does not enact that a bow-window, if *bonâ fide* commenced before the 1st of January, must be taken down. Such a bow-window, in the eyes of the law, is then built, and this clause refers only to those which are to be built with a new building, or added to an old one.

The longer we consider the subject, the clearer it seems to us that, as before stated, the regulations in schedule E, do not control shop-fronts forming a necessary part of buildings *bonâ fide* commenced before the 1st of last January, provided they are finished before the 1st of the ensuing January.

The correctness of this view of the question is made even more apparent, as it seems to us, by an examination of these regulations (headed "Wooden shop-fronts," &c.), for it is there further set forth, that if the street in which the shop-front is situated be less than 30 feet in width, no part of such shop-front must be higher than 15 feet. Now it may happen that a carcass was carried up before last January, in a street less than 30 feet wide, prepared with breastsummer, &c., for a shop-front (like one on Ludgate-hill for example), 18 or 20 feet high, with the concurrence, too, of the district-surveyor under the old Act. And surely that same

district-surveyor would not consider himself authorized by any thing in the new Act, to prevent the completion of such a shop-front and insist upon an alteration (which would probably entail the pulling down of the upper part of the house)? because that would be a manifest injustice to the owner (who had complied with the existing law), and would be directly contrary to the evident intention of the new Act, wherein such an injustice is carefully provided against by the arrangement, that if a building were even commenced before the Act came into operation, the provisions of the Act should not affect it. Yet, if the doctrine said to be held by the district-surveyors be maintained, such a proceeding might unquestionably take place.

THE NEW HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

In consequence of inquiries in the House of Commons as to the total estimated cost of the building, the following particulars were laid upon the table by Lord Lincoln a few days ago:—

	£.	s.	d.
Sum stated by Mr. Barry in evidence before the select committee of the House of Commons of last session	1,016,924	12	9
Deduct for purchase of premises and miscellaneous expenses	90,605	6	6
	926,319	6	3
Add for alterations at Victoria Tower, &c.	800	0	0
Add for residence of Clerk of the Crown	1,794	0	0
	928,913	6	3
Estimate of the total cost of the building, according to the latest plan approved	928,913	6	3

The works are proceeding satisfactorily, and it is asserted that the new houses will be ready in 1847.

The centre and certain portions of the river front are roofed in. The north wing is up in readiness for the roofs, part of which are already fixed, and the remainder are being put on. The south wing is nearly up to the level of the roofs, which are prepared, and in readiness for being fixed. A considerable portion of the north flank of the building is now being roofed in, and the south flank is up to the level of the roof, which is being prepared, and will soon be ready for fixing. The remainder of the north and south flanks, together with the turrets and pinnacles surmounting them, will be completed, Mr. Barry says, in the course of the present year. The Victoria Tower is carried up to a height of 38 feet, and the clock tower is at a height of 36 feet above the ground. The House of Lords is roofed in, and the ceiling and other fittings of that chamber are in hand. The central tower is carried up to a height of 28 feet above the ground. The House of Commons is about 30 feet above the ground. The other portions of the building are, upon an average, 30 feet above the level of the ground, some of which are in readiness for the roofs (now nearly ready for fixing), while others are being roofed in. A contract has been entered into for the finishings of the entire building, and those of the House of Lords, and the rooms provided for the business of that House are in hand.

Mr. Barry states, that some delay has taken place in the fixing of the iron-work of the roofs, owing to the unsettled state of the iron trade, and difficulties with workmen, and that the stone for the exterior of the building is still continuing to be supplied in great abundance, and of most excellent quality.

The iron roofs used are exceedingly light and elegant. They are covered for the most part with large slates from Valencia Island county of Kerry, where quarries of considerable extent have been opened recently, and afford employment to a large number of people.

Much iron is used throughout the building, and this material will probably be more employed elsewhere in consequence. The roof of the House of Lords is composed wholly of wrought and cast-iron galvanized. The joists and flooring of this House are also of iron, and are now in progress. We sincerely wish Mr Barry health to carry out his fine design.